

Dog Tales

by
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by Lilian
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DOG TALES.

"A Very Queen Party."

*I*T was Geoff's birthday, and for the first time since he could remember he had had no birthday party. This year the boys were away at school, and Great-Aunt Jane was staying in the house and couldn't stand the least noise. Geoff had to be as quiet as a mouse, and the Nipper wasn't even allowed to bark.

The Nipper was a delightful dog, and so companionable. If

you fell and hurt yourself he looked as sorry as possible, and never said: "It's your own fault, Master Geoffrey—you knew that slide was dangerous!" nor grumbled at you if you couldn't eat up every atom that was put on your plate. This afternoon both he and Geoff felt most disconsolate, for Mother had to stay upstairs with Great-Aunt Jane, who had "a touch of ague, my dear," and Nurse had turned them out of the nursery because the baby, who was cutting its teeth, had just dropped off to sleep. So they had had tea all by themselves in the schoolroom.

It was a very nice tea—plum cake with pink icing, and little

sweet biscuits with sugar stars—but neither of them had really enjoyed it. Geoff had left the table and curled himself up on the rug in the firelight when the Nipper made a remark.



“Don’t you think,” he said, with a little bark to attract Geoff’s attention, “that it is a pity to waste such good things? I have some friends in the neighbourhood

to whom those biscuits would be a treat. And why shouldn't we have a birthday party on our own account, eh?"

"It would be good fun," Geoff agreed (he was not really astonished to hear the Nipper speak, for he had always felt sure that he could if he liked). Before his sentence was finished the Nipper had disappeared, and it seemed scarcely a second before he returned with more companions than Geoff could count. They came crowding round him on the hearth-rug, slipping their cold noses into his nice warm hands, and making remarks to each other which he thought hardly polite.

"He doesn't look half such a



“nice little chap as a boy I once knew,” began a brown Retriever with very curly hair. He would

have said more, but the Nipper bit his tail to silence him, and a beautiful Collie with an elegant ruffle of white fur offered Geoff his paw, and wished him "Many happy returns of the day." A little fat pug with a jolly, round face sniffed eagerly at the biscuits, and a stylish black Maltese told him not to be greedy, but to get some for her if he could reach them.

"They might steady my poor nerves," she said plaintively, "for I'm *so* exhausted!" And a Dachs-hund puppy flopped down beside her and whimpered that he had missed his tea.

Geoff handed the biscuits round at once, and would have cut the

cake had not the Nipper stopped him.

"That's the prize!" he said, sharply. "It's to go to the one who tells the best story, and I'm to be judge!"

There was a chorus of disapproval at this, but the Nipper was firm.

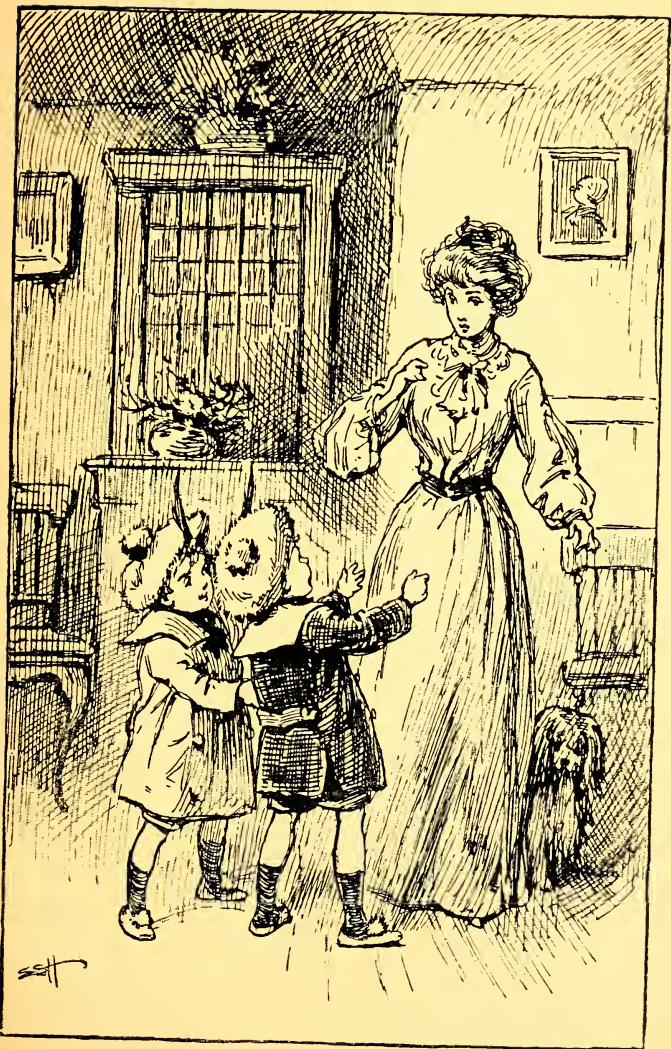
"It's my house," he said, "and my party. If you don't like my plans you can go home!"

No one stirred save the black Maltese, who crept quietly into the warmest corner and began to speak with her eyes fixed longingly on the glistening cake.

"My name is Violetta," she explained, "and I live with a woman foolish enough to harbour

three cats, two nephews, and a green cockatoo. I had quite a good time before the nephews came, and my mistress was most attentive. The cockatoo had an annoying habit at first of crying 'Bones!' when there were none to be seen, but I cured him of that by biting his tail when I had the chance. The cats I did not so much mind, for I'm rather partial to cream, and they soon learnt that I expected the giant share. Besides, if I helped myself to any little dainty that was not intended for me—human beings are *so* selfish—they always get the credit of it, which was as it should be.

"My only real cause of com-



plaint at that time was a ridiculous habit my mistress had of dropping tears on my nice black nose. She was very fond of nursing me, and would hold my face up to hers and tell me how 'lonely' she was. Silly thing—as if I were not enough company for anyone! The dog next door—a low, common creature to whom I never spoke save when I wanted to find out something—told me that she had quarrelled with her only sister, and hadn't seen her since she married. But that was no earthly reason why she should drop nasty salt tears on *me!* I had no patience with her.

“ Well, one afternoon last winter

a very loud knock came at the door, and two small boys bounced into our sitting-room and began to talk both at once.

“‘We’re the twins,’ they gabbled, ‘an’ you’re Mother’s sister, an’ Baby has the measles, an’ we’ve come to stay with you, an’ Mother’s love an’ she hopes you’ll keep us ’cause she can’t have us at home!’

“Their voices were so loud that they made my head ache, but—would you believe it?—that foolish mistress of mine took them both in her arms and hugged them, and began to cry over them as she did over me! Stupid woman! . . . Since then they have lived in our house—I am hardly ever

brushed—there is a falling off in the quality of my food—and I hear the baby itself is coming next week!”

Here the feelings of Violetta were too much for her, and she burst into a dismal wail. Geoff comforted her with the last remaining biscuit, and the Nipper called upon the Collie to tell them his tale.

The Collie's Story.

"*I* *T* is so long since my puppyhood," he began, dreamily, "that I don't remember much about it, except that I lived in the stables and made great friends with a famous racehorse. His name was Green Collar, and he used to tell me wonderful stories of the races he had won, and how it felt to go like the wind and have everyone cheering as he reached the winning-post.

"One day they fastened me up in a hamper, and sent me away. I didn't like my new quarters half so well. My mistress was

a great lady, and very lovely to look at, but I soon found out that she cared for no one but herself—and dogs are never happy with those sort of people. No one there dared to pet me, for she could not bear anyone to be taken notice of save herself. The only person who ever had a good word for me was a nice young fellow who came to see her sometimes, and brought her glittering things in leather cases. I knew by the smell of his clothes that he had dogs at home, and I used to get as close to him as I could and lick his hands.

“‘That dog never makes a fuss over anyone but you, Gerald,’ my mistress remarked one day. ‘You

had better have him, for he is rather a nuisance here.'



“‘Very well,’ he answered in a pleased tone. ‘I’ll give you a

"toy" instead.' And he took me off with him that very night.

"He lived in the country, within running distance of the sea, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself after the confinement of town. He was extremely fond of dogs and horses, and loved to be in the open air.

"'I wonder how he'll like dancing attendance on the lady when they are married!' said Browntoes, his own special pet.

"'It will never come off!' said old Rover, who was a most sagacious dog. And it never did, for soon we heard that the lady was going to marry some one else, and I, for one, was very glad, for my master's sake as well as my own.

“Did I tell you how fond he was of hunting? His favourite horse, Silvermane, confided to me



about this time that his master was riding too hard. ‘There’ll be an accident some day,’ he said. ‘It’s all right when I carry him

myself, but that brown filly he rides stumbled twice the other day, and I don't like the look in her eyes!'

"Silvermane was quite right, for barely a fortnight later the brown filly slipped at a fence, and my poor master was terribly hurt. I don't know what they did with him, for we were all shut up in the stables, and when we were let out there was no sign of him anywhere.

"A whole family of young people came to the hall after that—their father was poor Gerald's cousin, I believe—and we dogs were distributed among them. I was given to Ivan—a jolly little chap with very blue eyes, and what his old



THE COLLIE.

nurse called 'a venturesome disposition.'

"We were in a good many scrapes together . . . I shall never forget what happened when he took it into his head to be a Robber Chieftain!

"Some miles from our house was an old ruined castle. The children were forbidden to go there by themselves on account of its dangerous condition, but I think Ivan must have forgotten, for early one morning, when his nurse was out of the way, he slipped out and took me with him. On the way there he told me a lot about what a great Chieftain he was going to be, and how we would hold the Castle 'at the

point of the sword.' I didn't think much of his sword—it was only wooden—nor of the Castle, which was damp and gloomy and smelt of dust. And I soon grew tired of the games he played—I was always 'the prisoner,' and the food he pretended to bring me was only 'make-believe.' I was thankful when he decided that he wouldn't be a 'Robber Chieftain' any more.

“‘We'll just explore the tower before we go,' he said, and we squeezed through a little iron door that was partly ajar. When Ivan saw the belfry overhead he was too excited to notice that the stairs were all crumbling, and wouldn't listen to me when I tried to tell



him. There was an awful crash as they gave way, and we were both thrown violently backwards against the iron door, which shut with a bang.

"When the dust cleared I saw that Ivan was lying quite white and still, with his foot doubled up beneath him. He opened his eyes slowly after a while, but he could not stir, and though I shook the door with all my might and main it wouldn't open That was the longest day I ever spent.

"I was growing desperate when I saw a tiny ivy-blocked window cut in the stone a little way above us. There was a great drop on the other side, but I decided

to risk it and jump. I reached the ground quite safely, but I cut my front paw, and had to hobble home as best I could. I found them nearly frantic with alarm—they were talking of dragging the pond—and then I had to limp back all the way to the Castle to show them where Ivan was. Thank goodness, they sent a carriage for him, and took me inside . . . I never was so glad to get back to my kennel as I was that night!

“When Ivan was well again, which wasn’t for a long time, he went to school, and I missed him very much.

“He is at college now, and quite grown up. But we are the

best of friends, and I take care of his mother in town until the term is over. And then we go back to the country."



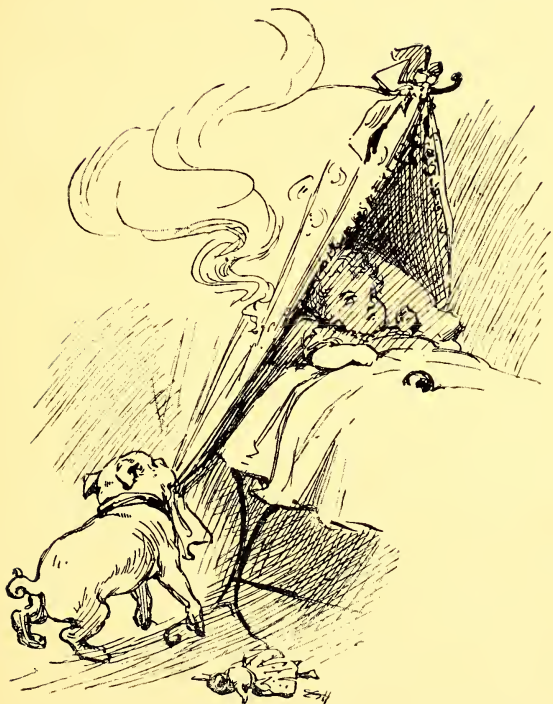
The Tale of the Pug.

"I WAS born in Devonshire," he began, "the very same day as the baby of the household. I was supposed to belong to it, but it was rather the other way, and when it grew big enough to crawl on the floor I used to have fine times rolling it over and over. It would put its little pink paw nearly down my throat, and though the nurse was sometimes silly enough to think that I might bite it, the baby knew better. It had a playful trick of uncurling and pulling my tail which I did not much care for, but it

made up for this by always sharing its food with me when it could.

“We were both about eighteen months old when something happened that gave me quite a standing with them. The baby hadn’t been well, and its cot was put quite close to the fire, for it was bitterly cold. It was a pretty cot, and very comfortable (I slept in it myself sometimes when I could smuggle in), and it had long muslin curtains lined with pink stuff.

“Well, the nurse went down to talk to the cook—they were great gossips, those women!—and presently a spark flew out of the fire and set light to one of the muslin curtains. The baby’s fluffy,



yellow head was quite close to it, so, barking as loudly as I could, I seized the corner that wasn't

alight and dragged it away from the baby. Its mother came in just at that moment, and I wish you could have seen her face! . . . It was nearly an hour before she stopped kissing and crying over the baby, and when it had gone to sleep she turned round and started on me!"

"Do you live there now?" asked Geoff, and the pug's cheery face grew sad.

"No," he answered, shaking his head, "and it's all my own fault too. I should never have left him save for a misunderstanding . . . Someone gave him a kitten—a round soft thing like a snowball—and he would take it to bed with him. Of course



THE PUG.

that hurt me dreadfully, though I ought to have known better . . . I rushed down to the village—I was never allowed beyond the garden after nightfall, but I was too angry to care for this—to talk it over with a friend of mine, and if I had taken his advice I should have been there now, and perhaps better off in many ways.

“‘You go straight home, young ‘un,’ he said, ‘and if your baby takes a fancy to a monkey, or a kitten, or a green kangaroo, just you wait till he comes round again and wants *you*. It’s the way with babies—they must have a little change—but they mean no harm by it.’

“‘It’s all very well for *you* to

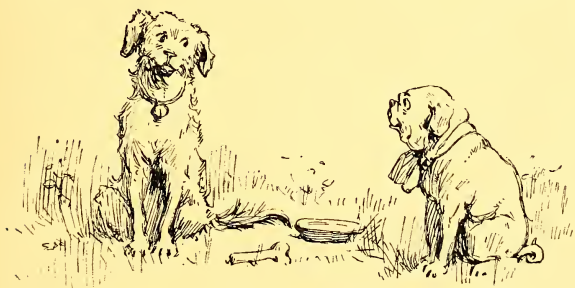
talk!’ I answered angrily, ‘but you’re too old to remember what it feels like!’

“My friend, who had lived in the same family for years and brought up three of the children, laughed softly as I walked off in a huff.

“‘You’ll grow wiser in time,’ he said. And I did, but not until it was too late. For as I went sulkily towards the harbour—I had decided to stay out all night to show how hurt I was—a sailor threw a sack over my head, and before I knew what he was doing had forced some nasty smelling stuff right down my throat.

“I remember nothing more

until I woke up in a strange place, and found myself shut up in a dismal garret with some other stolen dogs. We were well fed, for we had to be kept in good condition for sale, but it was



heartrending to think of that kitten being left in my place, and the baby crying because he could not find me.

“It was not long before the sailor, who declared I had been ‘born and bred in his native

village,' sold me to a lady with wide gold-rimmed spectacles. She was very cross indeed at times, and I was thankful when she decided that, 'though well bred,' I was 'not sufficiently intelligent' to be her companion, and gave me to someone she did not like for a wedding present.

"'You won't find him a very good house dog, I'm afraid, dear,' she wrote, sweetly, 'but I don't suppose that will matter, as you have nothing to tempt burglars in your tiny flat!'

"'What a spiteful woman!' said my new master as he read the letter, but my mistress only laughed, and put her pretty head on his shoulder.



“‘What does it matter?’ she said, happily, ‘we’re better off than she is, poor thing, with all her money.’ And though I may not be ‘intelligent,’ I knew quite well what she meant.

“I grew very fond of her in time, and it was well I had had my lesson. For her husband gave her a bicycle, and instead of taking me for regular walks, as she used to do, she would often go off on it alone, leaving me behind. I had a great mind to run away, but I remembered my old friend’s advice, and stayed on. And I am glad now that I did, for she has begun to take me out walking again and seems fonder of me than ever.”

There was silence for a few minutes as the Pug finished speaking. Then the Retriever lifted his head from Geoff's knee, and began to talk in a deep, soft voice that had a rumble in it.



The Retriever's Story.

“*Mr* name’s Nelson,” he said, “but I’m not a hero, naval or otherwise. I often wish that I had been christened something else. It makes people expect too much of me, and then they wonder why I don’t distinguish myself. And when I *do* go out of my way to oblige them they are not satisfied!

“There was that affair of the chickens. How *could* I be supposed to know that though I might not touch them, the cook might? I had often been blamed when the young ones were missing

(nice little things they were too—
so I was told!) and when I saw



the new cook come out in full
daylight and openly seize the
fattest hen, I naturally thought

that she was doing wrong. So I just caught her by the ankle—I remember she wore red stockings, which I never like—and held her firmly until someone came out with a whip to punish her . . . I won't tell you what occurred but it was not the cook who suffered."

"Dear me!" murmured the pug, sympathetically, but there was a roguish twinkle in his eye as he inquired: "Didn't I hear something about your rescuing a little girl from drowning?"

"It was what I intended to do," answered Nelson with dignity, "but the absurd child was only paddling, she said, and they made a great fuss over my drag-



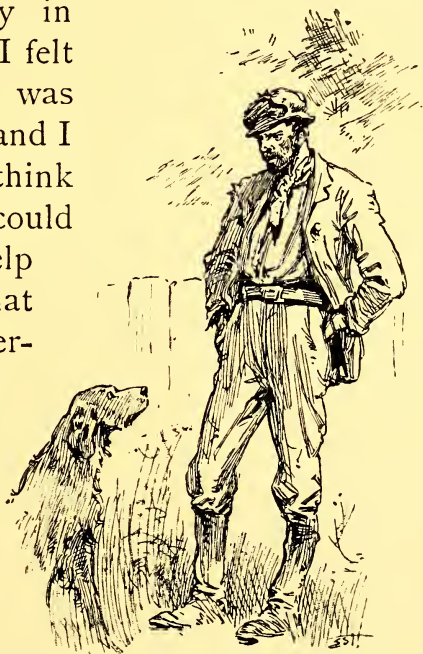
THE RETRIEVER.

ging her down and pulling her ashore by her hair. After that I gave up trying to be a hero, and went in for sport. I made friends with a poacher, and many's the outing that we had together when the nights were dark! He lived in a queer tumble-down cottage some little way from the village, with a starved-looking wife and a white-faced boy named Tom, who had a great admiration for me. He used to call me 'Bouncer,' which I liked much better than 'Nelson,' and no matter how much pain he was in—he could never run about like other children, but had to lie all day on a rough kind of straw mattress—he had always a smile for me. One

evening when I trotted round as usual to the cottage—I'm very partial to rabbit, and there was generally some going at supper time—I found Tom crying, and his mother just as bad. There was no rabbit either, and my friend the poacher had disappeared. I never quite knew what had happened, but Tom said they had taken him away.

“Poor Tom! he was very lonely that winter, for his mother used to be out all day, trying to earn a little money. No one ever went near them but me, and when I saw the scraps of dry bread, which seemed to be all they had to eat, I used to feel ashamed of my own good meals up at the Grange.

“‘Couldn’t you bring me a bone, Bouncer?’ he asked me one day as he snuggled up to me for warmth. He pretended he was only in fun, but I felt sure he was hungry, and I tried to think what I could do to help him. That very afternoon on my way home I met a pretty, dark-eyed



girl carrying a basket. I knew it had things to eat in it—I could smell the bacon—and I at once determined that Tom should have it. So I took it out of her hand—not roughly, you know, but firmly—and trotted back to the cottage with it. She ran after me pretty smartly—you would never guess from the look of her how fast she could run—and we both arrived at the door together. I pushed it open and hurried in, and she was just beginning to scold when she saw Tom. Then she said ‘O!’ and nothing more at all for a moment. I took that opportunity of getting away, for it was quite likely that she would have made unkind

remarks to me about taking her basket.

“When I went round next day—it was about dinner time, I remember—I found things looking much brighter. There was a lovely fire in the grate, and a warm covering over Tom. And he had a delicious plate of bones all ready for me. I often saw that dark-eyed girl there after that, and I think she had something to do with taking Tom away to a great red brick place in the city, where they said they would make him quite well. I hope they did, but I never saw him again. For my people took me to Scotland, and when I came back the cottage had been pulled

down and I couldn't find Tom anywhere."

A small yellow mongrel, who had crept in unnoticed, here barked excitedly.

"Had he black hair and a tiny red scar across his forehead? Then I know him well! He is my dear master, and runs errands for the grocer."

Nelson jumped up and nearly shook the little mongrel in his impatience.

"Take me to him at once!" he cried. "He'll be my master too before nightfall! I'll never lose sight of him again."

"Oh, sir," the mongrel pleaded, his thin little body quivering with anxiety, "*don't* turn me out!



I've never had a home before, and you're big and handsome and can shift for yourself. And he couldn't keep two dogs, you know."

A tear came into Nelson's soft brown eyes.

"I suppose you're right," he said, dejectedly. "Don't be afraid—I will not turn you out." And the yellow mongrel thanked him joyfully, and "You *are* a hero, after all!" said Geoff.

The Story of the Manchester Terrier.

A MANCHESTER terrier, with a coat like black satin and the most exquisite manners, was the next to speak.

“Of all the masters I have had,” he said, “the one I loved best was the first I went to. He was a genius, and of course absent-minded. At first he used to astonish me, but after a while I got used to his ways, and took quite an interest in the things he left behind him. At that time

of my life"—he blushed under his dark skin—"I am ashamed to say that I had a great weakness for kid gloves. There was something in the smell of them I never could resist, and when I learnt that my genius had a way of losing at least one pair a week, I thought I might just as well indulge my taste.

"‘Dear me, Mary,’ he would say to his wife in a distressed tone of voice, ‘my gloves have gone again. I can’t find them anywhere.’

"‘You must have left them somewhere,’ she would answer, severely. (As often as not they were in my basket.)

"He was just as absent-minded



about other things. One day when he was lunching alone, and reading at the same time, our

great black cat, Miranda, jumped on the table and quietly took the cutlet off his plate. The poor man was mildly puzzled when he found it gone, but 'I must have eaten it!' he said, and contentedly drank his coffee. I often wondered if he thought he had swallowed the bone.

"I did not approve of Miranda, but she taught me many things. One was, that the friendliest cats have the sharpest claws (this was when I had interfered with her kittens, who had taken possession of my basket). I might have grown into a genius myself if I had stayed in that house very much longer, but unfortunately, like my good friend, the Pug, I

wandered too far from home, and was stolen.

“I won’t tell you all I went through then, nor how I fretted for my master. I have never cared for the taste of a kid glove since. For the next two years my life was a very troubled one, and I was weary of moving about, when I was bought by a middle-aged lady with a discontented expression but—so her maid said—‘a good heart.’ The white dormouse, who couldn’t escape if he had wanted to, explained to me that this is always said of bad-tempered people who are difficult to live with.

“‘You’ll find her very grumpy,’ he remarked. ‘It doesn’t matter

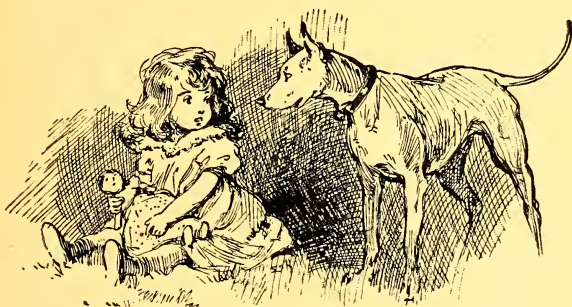
to me, you know, because I sleep most of my time, but no one else except her maid ever stands her for more than a month.'

"*I* stood her for three. Then I 'got lost.' It was quite easy—all I had to do was to slink out of the shop where she was quarrelling over the price of candles, and then run as fast as possible in the opposite direction.

"When I was tired I walked into the first open door I came to, and discovered a little creature with soft pink cheeks playing with a doll in front of the fire. I decided at once to stay with her—especially when I discovered that the doll's bassinette made me a most comfortable bed. No

one ever inquired for me, and I soon became one of the family.

"They were very poor. Nelsie, the little girl, had hardly any toys, and I know for a fact that her mother had to go without a winter



bonnet to buy my license. For all that, though, they were the happiest people I ever met, and I never heard a cross word while I was with them.

"One day Nelsie got ill. I

don't know what was the matter with her, but her eyes grew too big for her tiny face, and she hadn't a scrap of colour. A tall man with a very kind voice came in and looked at her, and said she was to have all sorts of things—'jelly and wine and sea-side air.' Her mother didn't say anything at the time, but when he had gone she just put her head on the table, and cried and cried. Of course I knew what that meant, and I felt so miserable that I rushed out and nearly frightened a harmless white kitten into a fit by chasing her for at least a mile. I was rather out of breath myself when I had done, and while I was resting a



lady in a bath chair caught sight of me.

“‘*Do* look at that dog!’ she cried to her husband. ‘Isn’t he the very image of poor Fido? Oh! I wish I could have him—I would willingly give ten pounds for him if his people would sell him!’

“Now the more clever you are, the sooner you think of things, and it flashed through my mind directly that if she bought me Nelsie could have the things. It was a great sacrifice, but there was nothing else to be done. So I smiled at that lady in my best manner, and let her see how beautiful my tail was.

“‘Isn’t he *sweet?*’ she said,

patting me with a very white hand that glittered with things like dewdrops. 'Oh, Angus, *do* get him for me!'



"They followed me home, and 'Angus' explained that his invalid wife had taken a great fancy to me, and would give any price they cared to ask. My mistress hesitated—I loved her for that—



but the thought of all the money would buy for Nelsie was too much for her. So she said he could have me."

Geoff wanted to ask how he liked his new mistress, but before he could speak he heard his



mother calling him softly. It was quite dark, and when she turned up the light he was amazed to

find that the only dog in the room was the Nipper. For a moment he wondered if he could have been dreaming, but the biscuits had all gone, and the Nipper looked far too innocent and virtuous to have touched them.

"It was a very queer party," said Mother, when Geoff told her about it, and I think you'll all agree with her.

